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Ray Rossomando and Gayle Hooker
Connecticut Education Association

*Before the
Education Committee*

Re: SB304 An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Labor History in the
Public School Curriculum

SB305 An Act Concerning the Inclusion of Personal Financial
Management in the Public School Curriculum

HB5349 An Act Concerning the Inclusion of CPR and AED
Training in the Public School Curriculum

March 5, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Rep Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you on these three bills.

My name is Ray Rossomando, Legislative Coordinator for the Connecticut Education Association which represents over 41,000 teachers. I am testifying jointly with Gayle Hooker, who is a West Hartford resident and Staff Representative for CEA whose primary assignment is in the New London area.

We testify today in support of three bills that incorporate important lessons of personal need and historical significance into curricula. We believe that the topics discussed in our testimony can supplement and enhance teachers' existing lessons, ultimately making curricula richer and more relevant.

SB304

CEA supports SB304, which would include the study of labor history and law, including collective bargaining and workplace protections in the public school curriculum. The history of the labor movement is a reflection of democracy and its infusion into the workplace. It is the story of the struggles and sacrifices ordinary workers made to have a voice. It is a story about fairness and due process that are the bedrock of our nation. It is a story of American quality of life.

The lessons we've learned from this story have often been born from abuses of power that have trampled the dignity and rights of others. Sometimes the abuses resulted in fatal consequences, such as the tragic Triangle Factory fire in 1911, which took the lives of 146 young primarily female workers. The Triangle fire triggered numerous workplace protections, including the forty hour work week and many other occupational safety laws. What history has also taught us is that mistreatment in workplace has not been limited to isolated tragedies. Poor or unfair treatment of workers has prompted other laws including the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family Medical Leave Act, and many other protections that were fought for by a few, but that have benefitted all Americans, not just union members.

The lessons of these contributions may be forgotten if they are not incorporated into the instruction offered in public schools. Labor history can be integrated into many subjects: for example, conflict resolution and the value of collaboration by studying the collective bargaining process and resolutions in sports, the arts by studying the use of paintings and music in the labor movement and the role of a shared governance in American history symbolized by two parties negotiating a contract as equal stakeholders. Clearly, it is not all positive and should not be one-sided, "labor history will be no more exempt from critical historical study than corporations and it is important for students to understand the strengths of labor history and its shortfalls." *Labor history can be incorporated into the current study of economics, government and the arts due to the growing body of resources available to students and educators at all levels. (*from James Green, American Educator, 2008) We join others in requesting your support of SB 304.

SB 305

In 2008, we learned as a nation, the meaning of the words recession, depression, foreclosure and economic recovery. We, also, learned and experienced the impact personal and institutional financial decisions have on the ability for consumers and especially young people to move forward successfully. "Knowledge is power" and SB 305 is a vehicle to provide assistance as students are confronted with personal financial decisions. Personal financial management education and financial literacy is a subject high school students have not been sufficiently exposed to and as a result may be vulnerable when it comes to handling credit, loans, debt management and savings.

There are four states, Utah, Missouri, Tennessee and Virginia that require high school students to take a one semester course, this Bill does not. This Bill (SB 305) does recognize the impact of personal financial management education as a component of preparing students for college and their first employment.

The curriculum can be incorporated into many of the subjects already being taught just as other subjects referenced in the existing statute. We ask for your support of this legislation.

HB 5349

The inclusion of training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of automatic external defibrillators is a reflection of a real world application for students as important as the other subjects listed in the current statute. This training has been advanced to such a high degree that each of us can be knowledgeable in this form of aid and be prepared to assist if the circumstances arise.

The Connecticut Education Association is a partner in education and our members support the following bills which can increase student knowledge and achievement in these important areas. Thank you for the opportunity to address you.